

**RECOVERY AND ENHANCEMENT OF
THE HISTORIC CENTRE OF SIRACUSA:
A BALANCED STRATEGY OF IDENTITY AND DEVELOPMENT,
WITH A POSITIVE IMPACT ON THE LOCAL COMMUNITY**
*Recuperación y mejora del centro histórico de Siracusa: estrategia equilibrada
entre identidad y desarrollo con impacto positivo en la comunidad local*

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ABSTRACT

The Italian site of *Siracusa and the Rocky Necropolis of Pantalica* was added to the UNESCO WHL in 2005, because it offers a unique testimony to the development of Mediterranean civilization over three millennia. Through the implementation of specific planning instruments, such as the *Piano Particolareggiato di Ortigia (PPO)*, and projects for economic and social action, the local government has been working for years on the restoration and enhancement of the remarkable cultural heritage of Ortigia, the island at the heart of Siracusa.

The PPO has addressed the choices for transformation of the historic city from a perspective of conservation and philological recovery; furthermore, thanks to European, National and Regional funding programs, a wide-ranging process of recovery has been launched on public and private building. Many open spaces have been refurbished, numerous areas have been pedestrianized and many public services have been initiated for residents. In this way, quality of life on the site has improved, whilst, at the same time, creating a favourable and attractive context for investors; not only are there huge, luxurious hotels, but also bed and breakfasts, small craft and commercial enterprises, thus encouraging many young people from Siracusa to invest in their own region.

The key idea of the recovery plan is to maintain the balanced level of *mixité* that has always characterised the historical city, and then to revitalise and reinforce the activities and functions that are already present in Ortigia (administrative, residential, commercial, tourist) and to introduce new ones (services, higher education), to prevent the island from becoming merely a tourist attraction, a lifeless outdoor museum. In order to do this, the local government has identified several strategies based on the criteria of sustainability, consultation, participation, local economic development and promotion of tourism.

The progressive enhancement of the historic centre, the services and the more humane dimension have shown the inhabitants of Siracusa an alternative way of

life and a superior quality, sparking off a return and re-appropriation of the historic city; and in this sense, we might talk about a widespread increase in wealth. The island has now become a laboratory for experimentation, which is then reproduced in the modern town. This paper aims to describe the strategies of conservation, regeneration and enhancement adopted in Ortigia, making it a positive example in the World Heritage scenario through its balance of identity and development, and the positive impact on the local community.

Key words: conservation, recovery, enhancement, historical centres, identity, development, local community.

RESUMEN

El sitio italiano de Siracusa y la necrópolis rocosa de Pantalica fue inscrita en la Lista de Patrimonio Mundial de la UNESCO en 2005, porque ofrece un testimonio único para el desarrollo de la civilización mediterránea de más de tres milenios. A través de la aplicación de específicos instrumentos de gestión, tales como el Piano Particolareggiato di Ortigia (PPO) y proyectos de acción económica y social, el gobierno local ha estado trabajando durante años en la restauración y mejora del patrimonio cultural notable de Ortigia, la isla en el corazón de Siracusa.

El PPO ha abordado las opciones para la transformación de la ciudad histórica desde una perspectiva de conservación y recuperación filológica; Además, gracias a programas europeos, nacionales y regionales, un amplio proceso de recuperación se ha lanzado en edificios públicos y privados. Muchos espacios han sido renovados, numerosas zonas han sido peatonalizadas y muchos servicios públicos se han iniciado para los residentes. De esta manera, ha mejorado calidad de vida en el sitio patrimonial, mientras que, al mismo tiempo, se ha creado un contexto favorable y atractivo para los inversores; no sólo hay hoteles grandes, lujosos, sino también casas rurales, artesanía y empresas comerciales, fomentando con ello que muchos jóvenes de Siracusa inviertan en su propia región.

La idea clave del plan de recuperación es mantener el equilibrio de la mezcla que siempre ha caracterizado a la ciudad histórica, y luego revitalizar y fortalecer las actividades y funciones que ya están presentes en Ortigia (administrativos, residenciales, comerciales, turísticos) e introducir otras nuevas (servicios, educación superior), para impedir que la isla se convierta en meramente una atracción turística, un museo al aire libre sin vida. Para ello, el gobierno local ha identificado varias estrategias basadas en los criterios de sostenibilidad, asesoramiento, participación, desarrollo económico local y promoción del turismo.

La mejora progresiva del centro histórico, los servicios y la dimensión más humana han demostrado a los habitantes de Siracusa una forma alternativa de

vida y una calidad superior, provocando un retorno y reapropiación de la ciudad histórica; y en este sentido, podríamos hablar de un aumento generalizado de la riqueza. La isla se ha convertido en un laboratorio para la experimentación, que luego se reproduce en la ciudad moderna. Este trabajo pretende describir las estrategias de conservación, regeneración y mejora en Ortigia, que es un ejemplo positivo en la situación del patrimonio mundial a través del equilibrio de identidad, desarrollo e impacto positivo en la comunidad local.

Palabras clave: conservación, recuperación, mejora, centros históricos, identidad, desarrollo, comunidades.

1. INTRODUCTION

«Urbem Syracusas maximam esse Graecarum, pulcherrimam omnium saepe audistis. Est, iudices, ita ut dicitur. Nam et situ est cum munitum ex omni aditu vel terra vel mari praeclaro ad aspectum, et portus habet prope in aedificatione amplexuque urbis inclusos; qui cum diversos inter se aditus habeant, in exitu coniunguntur et confluunt. Eorum coniunctione pars oppidi quae appellatur Insula, mari disiuncta angusto, ponte rursus adiungitur et continetur» (Cicerone, Orationes, In Verrem, II 4, 117).

The Island described by Cicero is Ortigia, the heart of ancient Siracusa, founded by Greeks from Corinth in the 8th century BC. The site of *Siracusa and the Rocky Necropolis of Pantalica* was added to the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2005, since it offers a unique testimony to the growth of Mediterranean civilization over three millennia (Unesco, World Heritage Centre 2005) (Fig.1). This paper will deal specifically with the historical centre of Siracusa, the island of Ortigia, and the strategies for its recovery and enhancement.

2. TOOLS FOR THE RECOVERY OF ORTIGIA: THE L. R. 70/76 AND THE PPO

Throughout the 20th century, and especially after the Second World War, Ortigia gradually lost its centrality, undergoing a slow process of impoverishment, depopulation and abandonment; increasingly inadequate to the new social demands, it became an out-and-out peripheral appendix to the city, which had expanded into the *terra firma* (Pagnano 1989). To remedy this phenomenon, in 1976, the Sicilian Region passed the Law n. 70 *Tutela dei centri storici e norme speciali per il quartiere Ortigia di Siracusa e per il centro storico di Agrigento*, geared towards building recovery and urban regeneration of the extraordinary palimpsest of cultures and architectures of the millennial Siracusan island.



Figure 1: an aerial view of Siracusa, the island of Ortigia in the foreground and the volcano Etna in the background (Ph. by National Geographic).

Law 70/76 included some innovative principles inspired by the Charter of Gubbio, such as the role attributed to historic centres, defined in article 1 as cultural, social and economical assets to safeguard, preserve and recover, and a particular awareness of the social aspects, as stated in art. 2 intervention in the historic centres must pursue the goals of preservation, redevelopment and enhancement of the building heritage as regards the historic, monumental and environmental, as well as building recovery for social and economic aims and the permanence of the present inhabitants (Cannarozzo 1999).

Consequently, the Law led to the drafting of *Piano Particolareggiato di Ortigia* (PPO), (Detailed Plan), in order to set up the necessary regulatory framework for construction projects to be financed by capital accounts; these interventions could be carried out by the City Council, both on public and privately-owned buildings; b) by private citizens, individual or grouped in consortia, with the possible participation of the City Council; c) by consortia or companies, made up

from the City Council and other public and/or private bodies.

However, the Plan's drafting process was to prove very long and complex, due to the initial inertia and the low level of awareness on the part of the municipal administration; the institution of *Ufficio Tecnico Speciale per Ortigia*, a Technical Office specifically created to study, planning, design, coordination and management of interventions, both public and private, was only instituted on Ortigia in 1986, with the PPO only being approved in 1990, by the Assessorato Regionale Territorio e Ambiente, (the Department responsible).

The PPO compiler Giuseppe Pagnano argued that regeneration on Ortigia had to stem from the peculiar features of its urban structure and the (monumental and minor) constructed heritage; the reconversion was to be geared towards the eventual return of its inhabitants, as well as the introduction of functional systems of public and private administration, (education, culture, tourism and commerce) (Pagnano 1989). In this way, the monumental heritage was allotted, by the Plan, to cultural activities, offices, universities and select functions, and the minor heritage to private and university residences. As regards residential buildings, the recovery of housing units was envisaged, with demolition to be carried out in some of the more run-down areas; this would also entail a reconstitution of the urban fabric, compromised by the improper privatization of roads, which would also guarantee potential escape routes in the case of earthquakes (Cannarozzo 1989).

On an urban-scale, the PPO analyzed traffic, traffic-flow, car-parks, public parks and facilities; it examined the ancient topography and monumental assets on the island (Figs.2-3), inquiring into its sustainable use; finally, it accurately scrutinized the constructed heritage, beginning with a detailed geometric survey of the buildings on Ortigia, examining the static and sanitary conditions, the characteristics of the properties, current use and the compatible hypotheses for reuse, the eventual presence of accretions and the need to eliminate them (Abbate 2014).

In the course of time, specialized studies were commissioned and carried out as support for technicians in recovery interventions, such as the *Codice di pratica per gli interventi antisismici nel centro storico* by Antonino Giuffrè and the *Codice di pratica professionale per il restauro delle fronti esterne degli edifici* by Sergio Tinè. In effect, with the increase of private interventions, the City Council set the objective of ensuring high quality standards, especially in the recovery of façades and the treatment of stone surfaces and plaster, in order to create a coherent and homogeneous urban whole.



Figure 2: millennial stratifications in the Cathedral lateral façade. The Greek Temple of Athena (5th century BC) was converted into a Christian church (7th century AC), dedicated to the Nativity of Virgin Mary.



Figure 3: a detail of the Cathedral lateral façade, with a Doric column incorporated in the masonry.

The Tinè Code is the result of a project that involved the National Research Council (CNR), the City Council, the BB. CC. AA. Superintendence, the School Building Body of Siracusa and numerous companies. This project elaborated a research program regarding degradation in the entire historical centre and experimentation on the treatment of stone material. The partner companies tested their products, changing them on the basis of the chemical/physical features of elements on which to intervene; they also modified the techniques in specific case studies, (as chosen by the research management), subsequently verifying and finally validating the tests results. Thus, it was possible to define a wide-ranging series of degradation types and technical behaviour, as observed on Ortigia, and to test out new techniques of intervention and provide methodological and practical recommendations to designers and operators, in order to ensure the preservation and conservation of the extensive building heritage.

Subsequently, the *Norme tecniche di attuazione*, (Technical Regulations), defined methods of intervention on the minimum units, corresponding to urban sectors or parts of them, and on the single building units. Provision was made for:

- a) the unconditional obligation to conserve the original external walls, whilst permitting static consolidation, cleaning and plaster consolidation, or their possible refurbishment with traditional techniques and materials. In some cases, with obligatory intervention, demolition and reconstruction are also allowed, with the creation of new, modern, glazed façades (or in period style), and re-proposition of the typological arrangement of adjacent buildings;
- b) the unconditional obligation to preserve the internal walls, with the possibility of carving new openings and changing the surface-finish;
- c) the obligation to conserve the shape, interior space and floors, with the possibility of altering any degraded surface-finish;
- d) the unconditional obligation to maintain position, structure, form and material of doors and windows, whilst permitting static consolidation, replacement of deteriorated elements with others possessing the old shape, stone-cleaning and surface consolidation;
- e) the use of wooden, window and door fixtures with traditional colours; the absolute obligation to preserve stairways, entrance halls and public passageways, with the possibility of static consolidation and refurbishing of forms and materials;
- f) the preservation of roofing or its overhaul, respecting the original construction characteristics, types and materials;
- g) remaking the iron railings, in accordance with the original design. It is permissible for the outdoor paving to be resurfaced in a regular or herringbone

pattern, with light, Comiso-type limestone for pedestrian ways and lava stone for driveways;

- h) downspouts must be in copper or galvanized sheets;
- i) the advertising signs for shops and offices must be small, with their positioning neither altering the façade nor hiding significant architectural elements, nor protruding excessively from the line of the façade.

The procedures provided by PPO for the management of interventions proved to be quite complex, because of the need to comply with the regulatory constraints and the interaction between the several bodies in charge (the Municipality, the BB. CC. AA Superintendence, The Civil Engineers, Fire Brigade, the Health Office), and the resulting administrative red tape in authorizations and funding grants. In 1991, the Law 433 *Disposizioni per la ricostruzione e la rinascita delle zone colpite dagli eventi sismici del dicembre 1990 nelle province di Catania, Ragusa, Siracusa* and subsequent amendments, ratified technical criteria and rules about intervention for seismic safety. There followed: on the technical plane, the activation of specialized studies for the definition of methods for intervention on the traditional construction system of Ortigia; on the economic plane, the provision of extraordinary contributions to fund operations by the Sicilian Region and, finally, on the procedural plane, the active involvement of Civil Engineer technicians to verify the structural safety of proposed interventions (Viola 2002).

PPO implementation was facilitated in 1996, by the Law 34 *Disposizioni integrative in materia di urbanistica e di territorio e ambiente. Norme per il quartiere Ortigia di Siracusa e del centro storico di Agrigento. Interventi per il quartiere fieristico di Messina. Deroa in favore di imprese alberghiere*. This law established a *Unified Commission*, made up of all the representatives of the parties responsible for interventions on Ortigia, and provided details (art. 18) about the contributions that the City of Siracusa is authorized to grant on capital account: 70 per cent of the expenditure for renovation and restoration of external façades, from 30 to 60 per cent for all interventions on common parts, operations for seismic improvement and interventions on property intended for commercial activity or craft workshops. The selection of appropriate procedural tools to oversee actions on the constructed environment became one of the main themes of reflection for the Siracusa administration, for research institutions and professionals with positive experiences of synergistic cooperation; on Ortigia, the system of implementation of PPO, together with Technical Regulations and descriptive tables of admissible interventions for each urban sector, has provided a unified and comprehensive framework to guide owners and professionals in their operational choices.

3. PROMOTION, ENHANCEMENT, INNOVATION

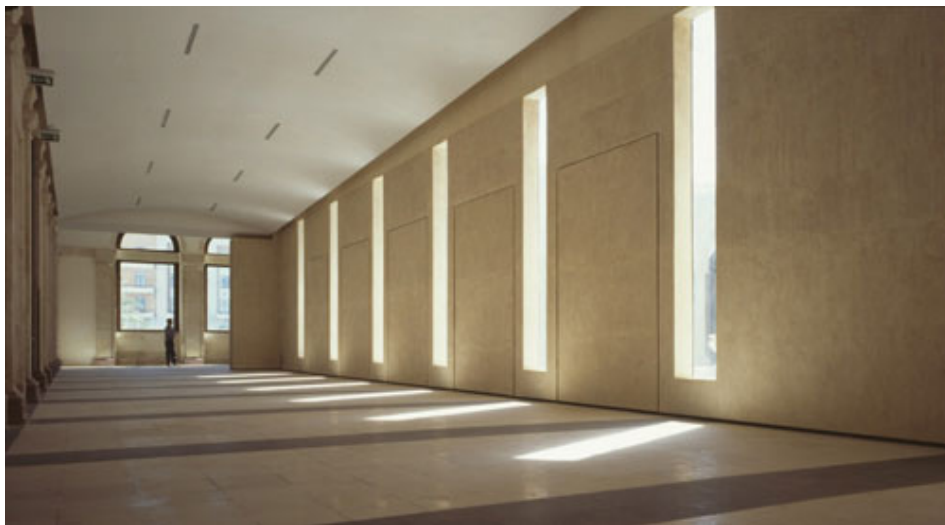
In recent years, the fervently-desired regeneration process has moved up a gear, thanks to integrated programming initiatives (PRU, URBAN, PRUSST, URBACT, environmental remediation Plan) which supplemented the ordinary tools, consenting substantial governmental investment. Most of the interventions were carried out in the area close to *terra firma*, because of its highly attractive commercial predisposition, and the area around *Lungomare di Ponente* (Fig. 4), much visited by tourists and townspeople in their leisure time; new operations were carried out on the infrastructure and street furniture; streets and open spaces were re-paved; the railings on the seafront were secured. The system of mobility and transport was also overhauled, with the gradual pedestrianization of Ortigia and the allocation of limited-traffic areas, the construction of two parking-lots near the *Lungomare di Levante*, the reintroduction of public water-transport and also improvements in the electrical public transport.



Figure 4: The Lungomare di Ponente, in the centre arises the Cathedral.

The *Culture* and *Tourism* systems are those on which the City Council has been focusing most in the process of revitalization of the island, creating a favourable and attractive environment for investors. Public activity has consisted in the restoration and consolidation of monumental buildings for cultural and quality activities, such as the *School of the International Institute of Ancient Drama*, the *International School for Restoration of Papyrus* and the *Mediterranean Study Center*, and a few of the city administration buildings, such as the *Department for the Historical Centre* at the restored Palazzo Cadorna Midiri. Moreover, three kindergartens, several Faculties of the University of Catania (Architecture, Humanities, Mathematical, Physical and Natural Sciences) and the University for Foreigners were inaugurated, with a consequently large flow of students on the island. We stress also the important role played by the Faculty of Architecture in research on the issues of recovery and maintenance of Ortigia (Caterina 2003, Fiore 2007).

The number of museums has increased and Ortigia now possesses six museums: the Regional Gallery of Palazzo Bellomo, the Maritime Museum, the Papyrus Museum, The *Arkimedeion* Multimedia Museum of Science, the Museum of Cinema and the Museum of Marionettes. At the entrance to Ortigia, the old Market now houses a tourist centre, a multifunctional space with exhibition and conference rooms, restaurants and services (Figs. 5-6). Marketing has focused on, and fostered tourism and cultural events related to the city's classical identity, including the annual cycles of tragedies, which attract many enthusiasts and visitors, making Siracusa a bastion of classical antiquity in Sicily (Fig. 7).





Figures. 5-6: the recovered old Market, housing now some exhibition spaces (Phs. by E. Fidone).

Public intervention has aimed to improve the standards of life on the island; the City of Siracusa has specifically equipped its administration with an *Urban Quality Service*, which deals with: 1) planning redevelopment of public space, 2) the installation of advertising signs and kiosks, 3) projects for pedestrian zones and green areas, 4) the installation of street furniture, 5) the enhancement of historical and artistic assets, 6) the organisation of events, shows and stands, 7) control over public entities and individuals operating in the historic centre, 8) responding to public announcements by the Sicilian Region for funding grants.

In recent years, there has been a growth in the building recovery process, although it should be noted that there have been limited interventions in the field of public housing, despite opportunities such as the pilot project for recovery for residential purposes (by the IACP, the Institute for Social Housing), of two urban districts, *Giudecca* and *Graziella*. Neither project has yet been implemented because of the lapse in PPO constraints regarding all that is destined for public use. Even though these constraints have been reconfirmed, the carrying-out of recovery interventions by private bodies, in the principal streets of both districts, has necessitated integration with other building units, and the difficulty of tracing an extremely fragmented property-map has considerably slowed intervention by IACP.

Today, the IACP, in agreement with the City Council, and with additional financial support from the Urban Recovery Program (PRU), is finally carrying out interventions in the Graziella district. The first intervention regarded urbanization work: street paving, lighting and furniture recovery. In the same district, the IACP acquired several building units and recovered four buildings, which now house services on the ground floor, and include 17 apartments for university residence on the upper floors. In Giudecca, the expropriation of a building consented the construction of a student guesthouse with 70 beds; this intervention also envisaged controlled demolition to create new public spaces and reconnect alley-ways, thus ensuring adequate pedestrian mobility (Orlando 2008).



Figure 7: 'Prometheus' by Aeschylus at the Greek Theatre in 2012, 48th Cycle of classical performances.

Nowadays, there are about 4,000, residents on Ortigia, in other words less than 4% of the city's total population of 118,000 inhabitants. There has not been widespread investment by the people of Siracusa in the recovery of residential buildings; this is probably due to the difficulties in financing procedures, which demand advance payment and the settling of balances on completion of the work,

allied to the duration of procedures for technical asseveration by the Unified Commission. Nevertheless, there has been a gradual upswing in the (especially high-level) housing market and a growth in property prices; the historic city continues to attract an increasing number of businesses and visitors, offering a myriad of opportunities to people from Siracusa who might want to invest in small businesses, craft workshops, restaurants, pubs and accommodation for all incomes, from five-star hotels to bed and breakfasts. The townspeople are returning to an ordinary life on Ortigia, in order to study, work or enjoy themselves; the next challenge is to introduce permanent residency.

Tightening the link between Siracusans and their cultural heritage, and developing a sustainable local economic system on this basis, is at the core of the strategic vision as laid down in the *Unesco Management Plan*; this can be clearly observed by analyzing the *Plans for cultural and social Promotion and cultural and socio-economic Enhancement*, where we find the following objectives: a) to foster ties and integration between local population and heritage, by augmenting knowledge about the site; b) to ensure that the economic benefits resulting from cultural heritage enhancement remain mainly with the local population, thus triggering a virtuous cycle; c) to support artistic and cultural activities linked to the site, its culture and traditions, representing the continuation of a pluri-millennial cultural process; d) to encourage the development of cultural activities aimed at maintaining classical traditions; e) to foster cultural tourism compatible with the conservation of the site.

Thus did the City Council open palaces and monuments to the community, promoting and organizing not only cultural events (*Fig. 8*), but also fun activities, encouraging its citizens, even the youngest, to come and visit, explore the city's heritage and eventually come to love it: exhibitions at the *Galleria Civica d'arte contemporanea*, (City Gallery of Contemporary Art), at the former nunnery of Montevergini and events at the Castello Maniace, whose court-yards accommodate a lounge bar, parties and night shows in the summer. Among the most recent initiatives linking art and urban regeneration we might mention *Re Building the Future - Spunti di Arte contemporanea per trapassare il futuro*, a project aiming to generate interest and activities in areas being regenerated that are sparsely visited by tourists and local people. Provision is made for: the installation of ten works of contemporary art in the Park of the Dionysian Walls, four workshops with local young people, a festival of contemporary art with cultural events, workshops, conferences and a competition for young architects.



Figure 8: contaminations of ancient and contemporary art, the sculpture 'Awakening' by Seward Johnson at Piazza Duomo (Ph. By A. Gagliardi).

Moreover, thanks to the *Smart Cities Living Lab* project, funded through the national competition *Energia da Fonti Rinnovabili e ICT per la Sostenibilità Energetica*, (Renewable Energy and ICT for Energy Sustainability), sponsored by the National Research Council and the *Associazione Nazionale Comuni Italiani*, (National Association of Italian Municipalities) in the most important archaeological areas of Siracusa, several interactive multimedia information-posts were positioned, with QR Codes, to enhance accessibility and understanding of the immaterial heritage for local people and tourists (Figs.9-10). The *Welcome to Siracusa* application allows one, with a smart phone, to access contents such as: geographical maps to help find one's way around on the tourist itinerary, descriptions and in-depth information sheets for each site, short 3D films, reconstructions of the most relevant historical monuments of Siracusa, aerial views taken from drones, virtual tours and immersive navigation around archaeological assets using 2.0 technology. The *Smart Cities Living Lab* project places Siracusa among the foremost international candidates with regard to *smart city* practices; this shows possible evolving scenarios for cities of art and provides a broad overview of the advanced levels of Italian research and technology, which transform the city into an experimental laboratory (Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, Smart Cities Project 2014).



Figs. 9-10: the interactive multimedia information-posts and QR Codes at the Temple of Apollo (6th century BC), installed thanks to the *Smart Cities Living Lab* project.

Today Ortigia is a city in ferment; it is becoming a *smart city* with a dynamic and challenging environment, the sought-after regeneration process is ongoing. The Impact Hub is an example of this: an *incubator* created in a former convent of the 16th century, which brings together people and professionals interested in developing projects with a social, economic, cultural or environmental impact on the local area (Figs.15-16). *Impact Hub* organizes events, promotes entrepreneurship and the acceleration of ideas and innovative practices (Siracusa Impact Hub 2014).



Figure 11: Siracusa Impact Hub, the impact of ideas.

4. CRITICAL SITUATIONS AND NEW CHALLENGES

Ortigia has emerged from the condition of peripheral marginality that characterized the island until the '90s; the PPO certainly helped to reverse the processes of degradation and abandonment of the area. In fact, the Plan constituted a basis for defining strategies for the recovery and redevelopment of the historic city and accessing EU funding; however Ortigia occupies an area of about 45 hectares and there is still much to do.

There is an evident imbalance between the recuperated parts, in the vicinity of the monumental buildings, the archaeological remains and the waterfront, and the areas of physical degradation and social marginalization; there has also been limited exploitation of the enormous monumental heritage, with only 10% of the 150 buildings surveyed by PPO being recovered. The number of businesses and craft workshops, mainly aimed at tourists, has grown, whereas the small neighborhood stores have declined. The restoration and enhancement process of the historic center of Siracusa was inspired by the principles of conservation and maintenance of the balanced *mixité* of functions, by increasing the present ones (administrative, residential, commercial, tourism) and introducing select new ones, such as higher education.

There has been exponential growth in the real-estate value of historic areas and the increasing investment of individuals and real-estate companies, barely countered by government interventions; Ortigia risks being turned into an elite district, whilst the great typological diversification is geared towards maintaining a social *mixité*. Indeed, a great challenge for the City Council is now to increase residential stability; in this regard we might mention the virtuous examples of Toledo and Segovia Consortia in Spain (Faraci 2013). To bring Siracusans back to Ortigia to live, services for children and the elderly need to be boosted.

The new PPO, prepared by the technicians of the Historic Centre Office, to give the island of Ortigia a new governance, is currently in the approval stage. The new plan has the task of creating new scenarios for safeguard and enhancement and presiding over the transformation of the historical centre, whilst facing up to the changing socio-economic and cultural conditions, with new models for development and fresh requisites for safeguard and enhancement.

The new tool demonstrates continuity with the Plan drawn up in the 1980s by prof. Pagnano, based on in-depth, analytical, historical, architectural and urban planning apparatus, which, though considered by many people to be too academic and restrictive, has managed to address the choices of transformation of the historic city, with a logical eye to conservation and philological recovery. The

Plan for Ortigia is considered one of the best Italian postwar experiences, in terms of planning for historic areas; it succeeded in sparking off a process of widespread recovery of the building heritage and subsequent revitalization of activities and function on Ortigia.

The new plan proposes verification and updating of the previous one, starting from results achieved, and bringing its choices and objectives up to date: increasing permanent residence and the repopulation of Ortigia in accordance with a more homogeneous local distribution, recovery of residential buildings and run-down districts, relief from seismic vulnerability, the re-deployment of large, unused public buildings, the redevelopment of public spaces, the setting-up of business activities, crafts and local services for residents, the enhancement of sustainable mobility and overcoming architectural barriers, an increase in structures for tourist accommodation, the role of the port and the relationship between the built-up city and its sea-front.

The aim of the plan, in a vision shared by the Administration, business enterprises and social parties, is to revitalize the socio-economic and cultural fabric, maintaining the balanced level of *mixité* that has always characterized the historic city; to accomplish this, it will introduce new procedures for implementing the urban blueprint, with criteria such as flexibility, negotiation, consultation and participation. The new Plan has stimulated a debate between the Administration and townspeople on the need to augment the choices, following the logic of the “process plan”, so as to examine more deeply the strategic issues for the recovery of the historical city and assess the opportunity of introducing possible corrections as well as innovative, and sincerely shared, choices.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The restoration and enhancement process for the historic center of Siracusa was launched in the 1990s, inspired by the principles of conservation and maintenance of the balanced *mixité* of functions, bolstering the present ones (administrative, residential, commercial, tourism) whilst introducing select new ones, such as higher education. Ortigia has emerged from the state of peripheral marginality that used to characterize the island, and the PPO has definitely helped to reverse the processes of degradation and abandonment. In fact, the Plan constitutes the basis for defining strategies for the recovery and redevelopment of the historic city and for acceding to funding.

As mentioned above, in recent years the City Council has invested primarily in *Culture* and *Tourism* systems, with widespread recovery of the public building

heritage, redevelopment of open spaces, the pedestrianization of many areas and the reallocation of important public buildings (transformed into cultural incubators). In addition, there has been considerable activity in the marketing of tourism and cultural events linked to its classical identity, turning Siracusa into a bastion of classicism in Sicily; initiatives linking art and urban regeneration have been launched; several pilot projects have been advanced for the enhancement of the local area and its cultural heritage.

The progressive enhancement of the historical centre, the standard of life and a more human face, have opened the eyes of Siracusans (and not only Siracusans) to a different world, sparking off a return to, and re-possession of, the historic city. An attractive and dynamic environment has been created, based on cultural identity, stimulating a local economy geared mainly towards tourism and leisure; Siracusan youth, along with a number of local business enterprises, have been encouraged to invest in their own region. Thus, not only are there huge, luxurious hotels, but also bed and breakfasts, traditional craftshops and small businesses.

Therefore, we can define Ortigia as a virtuous example in the World Heritage scenario for the conservation, regeneration and enhancement policies adopted in the city, in the balance between identity and development, and with positive effects on the local community. Much has been made but much remains to be done, especially to increase the number of residents; in effect, only 4% of the urban population lives in Ortigia and interventions of residence recovery by the people from Siracusa are still limited. The main challenge currently is to move from experimentation to widespread and conscious practice of the recovery of private housing. To do this, you need to stimulate the owners, simplifying the procedures and access to grants, increasing the services for residents.

In addressing the new public policies, we hope that the new PPO, with its years of experience, will manage to plug the gap of missing functions; in this operation, the strategic issues need to be shared, and so the debate with the various stakeholders, and especially with the local citizens, plays a fundamental role. It is essential for the local public administration to accept innovation, to focus awareness and ensure the participation of local citizens; only debate can generate good policies. The contribution of all parties is vital in order to reshape the city and the local area; action needs to be taken on abandoned and neglected areas, whilst, not only repairing the urban fabric but also enhancing the way one occupies the space.

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